
Requests for Legal Advice

The Attorney General and the Division of Criminal Justice receive many letters from citizens requesting legal advice. ***We are not authorized to render legal advice to private citizens.***

To obtain legal advice, you should contact a private attorney of your choice. If you are unable to afford a private attorney and meet income eligibility requirements, you may wish to contact:

Legal Services of New Jersey, Inc.
P.O. Box 1357
Edison, NJ 08818-1357
(732) 572-9100

Letters from Inmates or Criminal Defendants

The Attorney General and the Division of Criminal Justice are representatives of the State in criminal matters. As such, our legal status is the same as that of the prosecutor in any criminal litigation in which you may be involved. This means that we cannot communicate with you except through your attorney. If you allege that your rights have been violated or if you have other concerns regarding your case, you should communicate those concerns to your attorney for appropriate handling.

Complaints or concerns about state prison facilities should be addressed to:

Department of Corrections
Office of the Ombudsman
P.O. Box 863
Trenton, NJ 08625 -0863

Letters Regarding Topics of Public Interest

Citizens often write to government officials with general comments or suggestions about the criminal justice system. We also receive many letters commenting on highly publicized cases, which the letter writer is not connected to in any way. If your letter falls into one of these categories, you should know that it has been read and considered by at least two professionals in the Division of Criminal Justice. In most cases, the letter is referred to the section or unit dealing with issues of the type discussed in your letter. Please be assured that the fact that your letter does not receive an additional response does not mean that your letter has had no impact. Letters from our citizens are an important means of keeping us informed of how the public views the criminal justice system, of where the system succeeds, and where it falls short. Information that we learn from reading your comments regarding the criminal justice system may influence policy decisions that will impact thousands of people.

Prior Letters

Often, citizens send the same letter or similar letters about the criminal justice system to more than one government official. Usually, all of the government officials receiving these letters refer them to the Attorney General and the Division of Criminal Justice. The letters are all assigned to the same Deputy Attorney General for review. ***Letters containing substantially the same questions or complaints as a prior letter will not be answered again.***

How and When to Contact the Division of Criminal Justice

An Explanation of the Review and Referral Process for Correspondence from Citizens Regarding the Criminal Justice System



Publication Date – July 2000

Division of Criminal Justice
Hughes Justice Complex, P.O. Box 085
Trenton, NJ 08625

Introduction

This brochure explains the process that your letter has initiated. It also provides referral information for letters we receive that do not fall under our purview.

If you have written about your interest in or dissatisfaction with a specific aspect of the criminal justice system, you will receive a written response addressing your concerns. Otherwise, your correspondence may be referred as indicated in this brochure.

The Review Process

If your letter falls within our authority, it will be reviewed. In most cases, the review process is as follows:

- 1 Your letter is assigned to an investigator. This investigator determines whether there are additional letters either on the same subject or from the same correspondent.
- 2 Your letter and any relevant prior correspondence are then forwarded to a Deputy Attorney General for a preliminary review. Depending on the nature of the inquiry, the assigned Deputy Attorney General may request additional information from the appropriate County Prosecutor's Office or local law enforcement authorities.
- 3 In most cases, this preliminary review is limited to analyzing what has already occurred. No testimony is taken and separate investigations are not conducted in most cases.
- 4 Once the preliminary review is completed, there is another review conducted by a committee of several Deputy Attorneys General

and their super-visors. A final decision is reached at this time. Correspondents are notified of the outcome of the review by mail. ***There is no appeal from this decision.***

Referral Information

Civil Litigation

The Attorney General and the Division of Criminal Justice receive many letters requesting that we intervene in civil litigation, or prosecute criminally a party with whom the letter writer is engaged in a civil lawsuit or dispute. ***We cannot intervene in civil litigation or disputes or change the outcome of your civil litigation in any way.***

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a civil case, you may wish to discuss the possibility of filing an appeal with an attorney of your choice. If you need information on filing your own appeal, you may call the Clerk of the Appellate Division for help with *pro se* appeals at (609) 292-4822.

Child Support

If your correspondence concerns child support, you may wish to contact the Child Support Enforcement Services Unit in the Administrative Office of the Courts. That unit can be reached at the following address:

Child Support Enforcement Services
Probation Division
Administrative Office of the Courts
www.judiciary.state.nj.us/probchild/index.htm
P.O. Box 987
Trenton, NJ 08625

Complaints About Judges

If you feel that a judge has acted improperly in the course of adjudicating your case, you may contact the Supreme Court's Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct at the following address:

Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct
c/o Administrative Office of the Courts
www.judiciary.state.nj.us/appdiv/forms/forms.htm
P.O. Box 037
Trenton, NJ 08625

The Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct makes recommendations to the Supreme Court on matters concerning the conduct of judges. Its action, if any, will not change the outcome of your case. In order to affect the outcome of your case, you must pursue the civil remedies available to you, such as filing an appeal, or a motion for reconsideration or other post-judgment relief.

Election Complaints

Election complaints may be referred to:
Department of Law and Public Safety
Division of Elections
www.state.nj.us/lps/elections/
P.O. Box 304
Trenton, NJ 08625-0304

Non-Criminal Complaints About Local Government Officials Not Involved in Law Enforcement

Non-criminal complaints not involving elections about local government officials may be referred to:

Department of Community Affairs
Division of Local Government Services
www.state.nj.us/dca/lgs/lgsdcadlgs.htm
P.O. Box 803
Trenton, NJ 08625-0803